How to FRAME PICTURES

Cooperative Extension Service
Virginia Polytechnic Institute
Blacksburg, Virginia

Circular 1001
Reprint October 1966

How to

FRAME PICTURES

Prepared by Glinda B. Leach and Louise Woodruff. Reprint courtesy University of Missouri.

Fig. 1

A frame encloses a picture and adds to its beauty. It is the connecting link between the picture and the wall. A well selected frame lets the picture dominate, but it, too, has beauty (Figure 1).

CONTENTS

Your Picture Frame **2**

Your Mat **3**

Step by Step **4**

In Place of Frames **6**

Your Picture Frame

You are probably safe if you select a frame that is not quite as dark as the darkest colors in your picture. However, it is all right to select a lighter one. Usually your frame should be darker than your mat and in harmony with both the picture and wall.

If your picture has simple lines, your frame probably should also. Remember to let your picture dominate. Let the frame act as a connecting link for your wall and picture.

You can get a ready-made frame or select moulding and have a frame made. Or you can buy moulding and make a frame.

Picture moulding is available in a number of sizes and shapes (Figure 2). Try different shapes and sizes with your picture. This will help you most in selection.

Picture moulding differs from builder's moulding in that it has a groove (rabbet) cut into the bottom inner edge. This holds the picture, backing and glass. However, builder's moulding may be used if a groove is added. This may be cut, or made by gluing a thin strip of wood on the back of the moulding.

Fig. 2—Kinds of moulding.

Shall a picture have a mat or be framed closely?

Frame an oil closely. Generally it is better to mat a print. But you can frame a print of an oil painting closely as you would the original.

Use a mat on a water color, woodcut or an etching.

Your Mat

Use a wide mat for a picture that shows decided movement. Do this especially if the lines of the picture have a tendency to carry the eye out of the frame.

Woodcuts and etchings usually require wider mats than other types of pictures.

Use a wide mat when the subject seems to "fill" the picture. A wide mat is suitable for a picture which you want to appear larger. But don't make the mat so large that the picture ceases to be most important.

Make the bottom margin of a mat wider than the sides or the top. If your picture is vertical, make the top margin wider than the sides. If your picture is horizontal make the side margins wider than the top. For a square picture make the sides and top equal and the bottom wider (Figure 3).

Usually it is safe to choose a mat that is slightly darker than the lightest colors in your picture. But if these light tones appear in very small amounts choose a mat only moderately darker.

You can select a mat from regular matboard or cardboard. It can be plain, colored or textured. Often you can cover cardboard with fabric or wallpaper to get a desired texture.

Shall a picture have glass?

Oils don't need glass because they clean well.

Use glass with pictures which cannot be easily cleaned. Be sure to use picture glass. It is thin, durable and free from defects. Too, it has no green tint.

Glass protects a picture from dirt and wear. It tends to deepen the colors, but often causes glare from light reflection.

Non-glare picture glass is available. It might be the best selection if the picture will hang where there is a good bit of light. It has to be placed directly against a picture because of its density, and because of this it cannot be used with a mat.

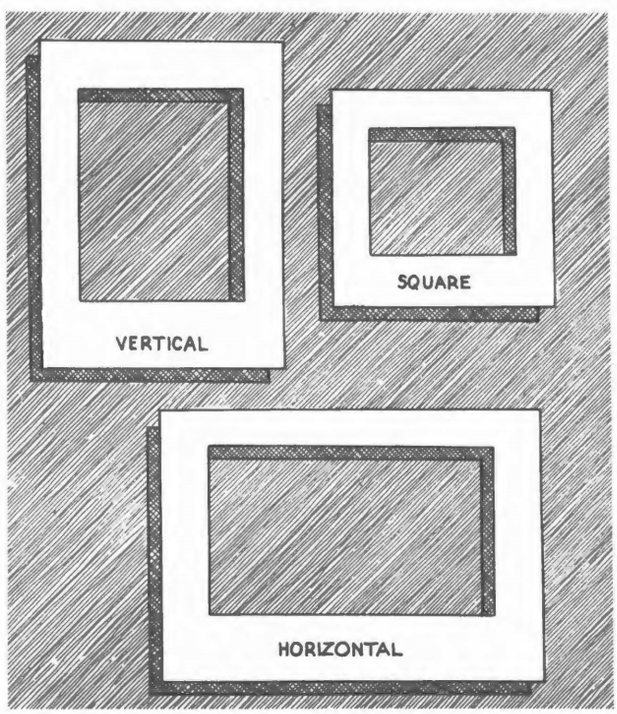


Fig. 3—Proportions for mats.

Fig 3, courtesy Purdue University Agricultural Extension Service.

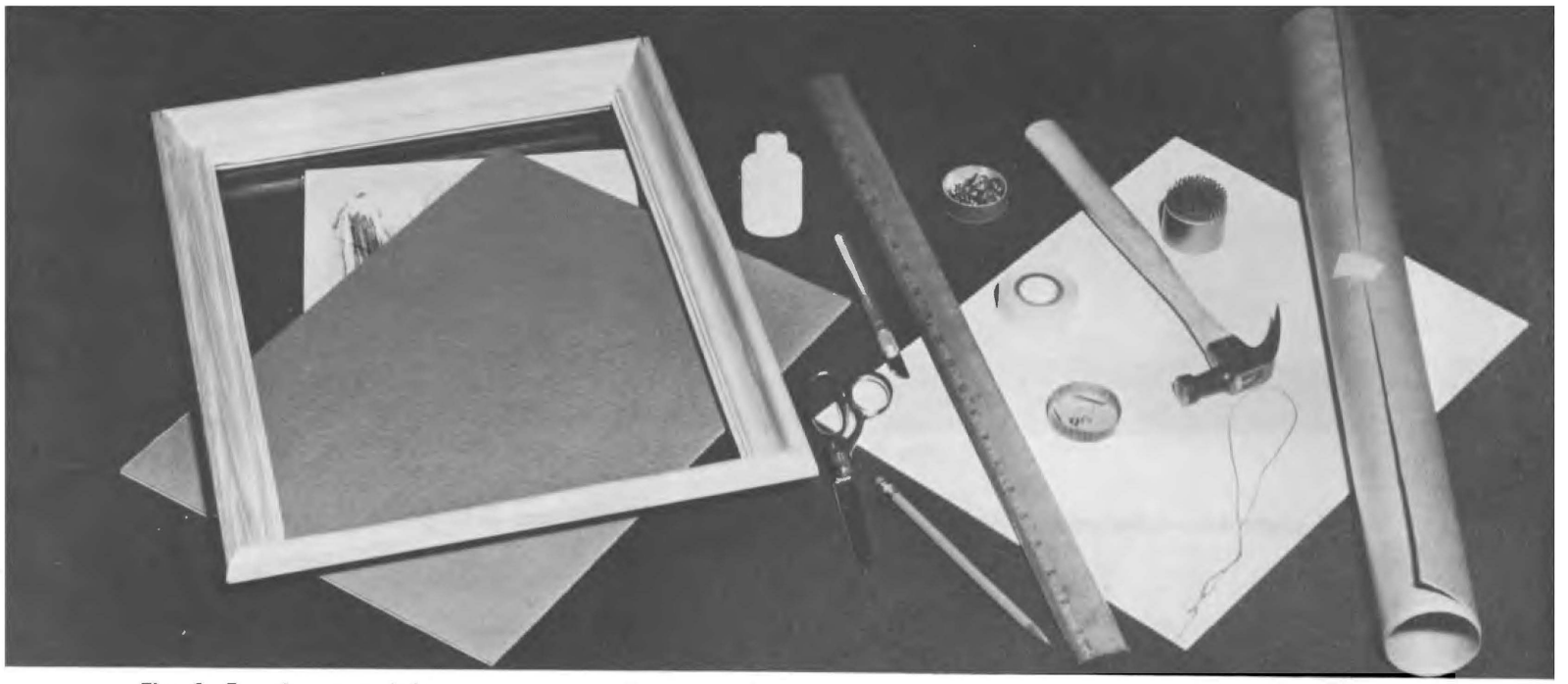


Fig. 4—Framing materials.

A nice even coat of plastic spray will protect many prints almost as well as glass. This is often used on pictures, especially prints.

Certain kinds of plastic spray will yellow colors slightly. Try the spray on another kind of paper before you spray your print.

Many stores which sell prints offer mats, frames and other essential items for framing. Often the salesman will frame the picture for a small charge or tell you where you can get it done.

You may want to do your own framing job. In addition to your picture and frame you will need (Figure 4):

- Glass to fit frame (or plastic spray)
- Material for mat
- Cardboard for back (corrugated cardboard is good)
- Wrapping paper
- Screws and lightweight wire
- Mat knife
- A metal-edged ruler, pencil, scissors, pins, white glue, nails, hammer, masking tape, thumb tacks
- Cleansing tissues, soft cloth

Step by Step

1—Prepare frame.

Your frame may need a finish or repair job. For an unfinished frame, smooth sanding and a thin coat of paste wax may be all that is needed.

2—Cut mat to fit frame.

Measure from back opening which includes rabbet. (Figure 5). Subtract ⅛ inch from both length and width. This allows for expansion.

3—Cut mat opening for picture.

- Decide on margin allowances.
- Place picture on back side of mat, making sure it is square with the corners. Stick pins in each corner of picture. Lay ruler diagonally across, connecting two corners. Move pins ⅛ inch in toward center (Figure 6). Push pins ***completely through*** mat. Repeat for other two corners.
- Remove pins and picture. Inner pin marks on

mat show cutting corners. On front side of mat use ruler to guide you in making very light pencil lines to connect pinholes, forming outline for picture (Figure 7).

- Use mat knife and metal-edged ruler for guide in cutting opening (Figure 8). Practice cutting on a scrap piece of mat material first.
- Protect work surface and assure easy cutting by putting cardboard under mat. Cut from front side of mat at a 45° angle. Cut lines slightly past each corner to assure square corners.

4—Cut cardboard the same size as mat.
This serves as your picture backing.

5—Hinge backing and mat at top to form a folder.

- Turn mat to wrong side and meet with edge of cardboard (Figure 9).
- Use masking tape to attach the two at top.

6—Tape top of picture to back of mat (Figure 10).

7—Place ensemble in frame.

- Spray picture prior to this if you select plastic spray for protection.
- If you choose glass, clean it on both sides and place it in frame first.

8—Drive finishing nails or wire brads into edge of rabbet (Figure 11).
This holds all parts in place.

9—Glue wrapping paper to back of frame.

- Apply glue to back of frame along edge.
- Lay back of frame against slightly dampened brown paper. Smooth paper from center out to all sides to make it dry taut.
- When dry, cut the excess paper away. Fold edge back and cut along fold with knife. Or fold edge down and stroke edge of fold with emory board or sandpaper.

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

Fig. 8

Fig. 9

Fig. 10

Fig. 11

Fig. 12

10—Prepare for hanging.

- Measure about one-third way down on each side of frame back.
- Place a screw eye at each point.
- Cut wire 6 inches longer than distance between screw eyes.
  Put ends of wire through screw eyes 2 inches. Pull ends back and twist around rest of wire.
- Place a thumb tack at each lower corner (Figure 12). This helps picture hang straight and keeps dust from collecting behind picture. Pieces of foam rubber or cork can be used instead.

In Place of Frames

Adjustable clamps can be used for hanging pictures (Figure 13). They are available in plastic or metal at art and book stores. With these your picture can be hung with or without glass.

Clamps are especially good for temporary use. If you aren't sure that you want to frame a picture for a particular spot, hang it with clamps until you decide. These are ideal if you wish to change pictures often.

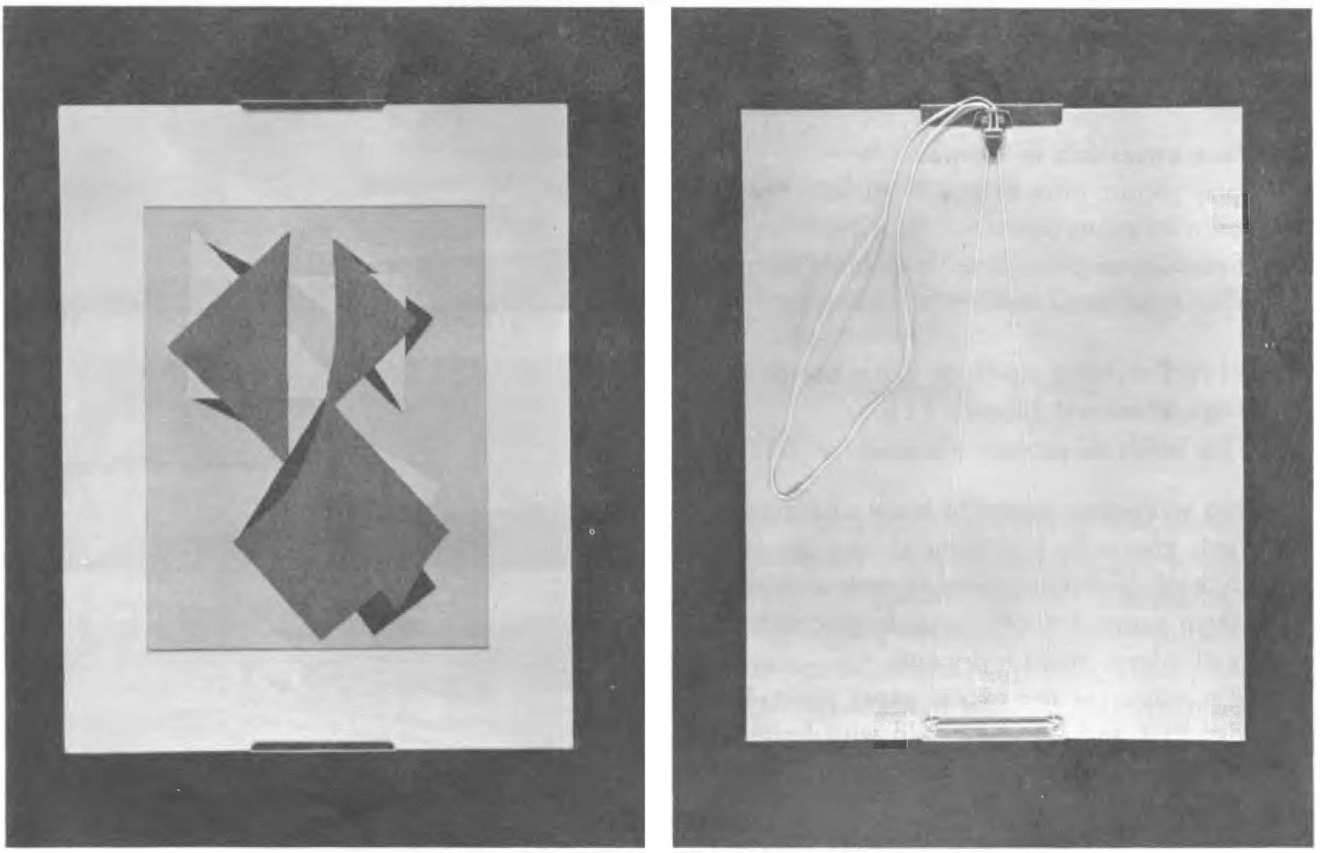


Fig. 13—Front and back views of picture with adjustable clamps.

Fig. 14

Moulding properly mounted on the wall will serve as a frame for one or more pictures (Figure 14). This is another way you can change pictures often.

A WELL SELECTED FRAME. . .

- **Lets the picture dominate.**
- **Encloses the picture and adds to its beauty.**
- **Is the connecting link between the picture and the wall.**

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U. S. Department of Agriculture. W. E. Skelton, Director of Extension Service, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061.

Rp–10:66–5M–1–2

PICTURES FOR PLEASURE

We considered pictures briefly in connection with our demonstration on living room arrangement. We stressed points then on placing and hanging of pictures which should be reviewed with this discussion. Now we wish to continue our study of pictures to include appreciation of a few pictures for themselves.

Reasons for using pictures on our walls may be:

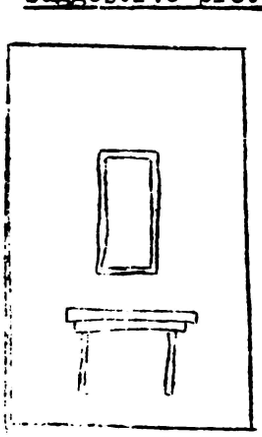
1 - For beauty of line, color or the subject itself.
2 - For the interest or personal appeal of the subject.
3 - As reminders of places, scenes, or incidents that we have known and liked, or would like to know.
4 - To complete furnishings groups.
5 - To relieve monotonous wall spaces.

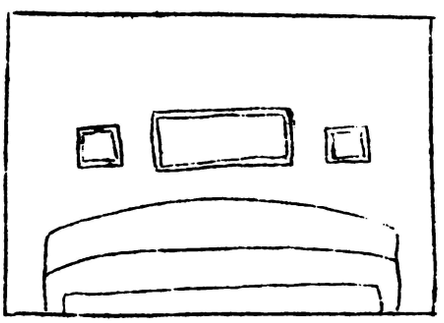
If the pictures we use are to satisfy any or several of these needs, we should make a few pictures our own by getting acquainted with them. Most good pictures have stories back of them, and there are interesting things to learn about the artists who painted the originals that often help us to better understand and appreciate the pictures they painted. Aside from this, a study of a good picture itself will reveal many things about it that lead us to understand other pictures also. (Have a few color reproductions with which you have become familiar, to show and discuss at this point).

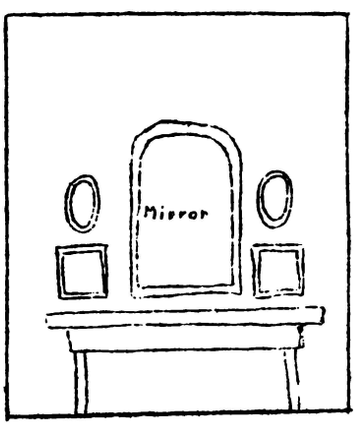
The framing of pictures should be carefully done. Small prints, etchings, and wood blocks are usually framed with mats. The mat should blend in color with the picture; narrow molding will make the frame. The color of the frame should harmonize with the colors in the picture, being about its middle tone. The frame should enhance the beauty of the picture without attracting undue attention to itself. Good magazine pictures can be framed in the same way as those bought from picture dealers. In some cases they may be acceptably framed with inconspicuous passepatout binding. Sometimes small prints can be made into placques by mounting on stiff cardboard or light wall board, framed with binding without glass, and the whole shellacked.

The arrangement of pictures in a room means a great deal toward one's enjoyment of them. They should not be spotted around the walls without any plan. They should be related to groups of furnishings, using either a rather large picture or several small ones of similar kind and type in a group over a large or heavy piece of furniture. While most pictures look best when hung at a height about at the level of the eye, small ones may be placed lower when one expects to enjoy them while sitting at a desk. Never hang pictures in a stairstep line. (Review other rules for hanging).

Suggestive picture arrangement:







It is suggested that those interested in securing pictures get illustrated catalogs [illegible] of the several good sources of color reproductions, observe copies one sees at every opportunity, then choose those one likes best and hang them where they can be enjoyed.

Pictures are probably of more importance in the living room than in any other part of the house because more people have the chance to see and enjoy them there more of the time. For that reason they should be pictures of real general interest, appropriate also in color and size, and properly framed and hung.

In this demonstration we can only refer briefly to selection of pictures. These living room pictures, however, should always be framed ones, not photographs, unless one or two on a desk; and there should be a definite need for them. Too many of any kind should be avoided.

The hanging of pictures may be done properly by any club member who follows these rules:

1. Hang pictures so that their centers are at the eye level of a person standing.

2. Hang all pictures flat against the wall, not tipping forward.

3. Large pictures may be hung from a moulding with two parallel wires or cords of the same color tone as the wall.

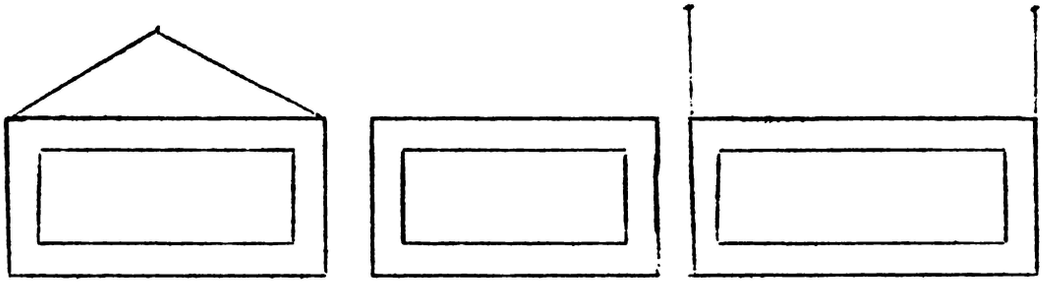
4. Small pictures should be hung invisibly.

5. Small pictures, hung by themselves, should be placed low near a desk, table or reading group.

6. Pictures of different subjects or types should not hang on the same wall or in the same group, e.g. landscapes and portraits, or a cathedral and a Japanese print.

7. The size and shape of a picture should correspond to the size and shape of the wall space it occupies.

8. Judge your picture arrangement by asking: is each picture in the room there because it helps to beautify or complete a group?



1. INCORRECT

2. CORRECT
Invisible hanging. Hook and wire behind picture.

3. CORRECT
Two-wire method for large picture.

Accessories which add to the livableness of a living room include simply covered pillows, small tables, lamps, bookends, magazine racks, ash trays, footstools, vases, and real flowers. After the furniture and pictures have been properly arranged, it is then time to decide which of such small articles are really best to use in your own living room. You may need to put away some that you have, or may discover that a footstool, a basket for magazines or papers, a wood basket, or new pillow covers, may be added to advantage. One or more such articles may be made by the club member as part of her year's work. She should decide upon one that is really needed in her home.

References: The Pictures in Your Home - 25¢ - American Art Bureau, Chicago
Magazine articles on pictures and furniture